DISPENSER FOR TABLEWARE

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3 Claims. (Cl. 312-42)

1. This invention relates to improvements in dispensers for tableware. More particularly, it relates to structures adaptable for use in restaurants, cafeterias and the like for conveniently and attractively storing tableware such as forks, spoons and the like so that such articles are maintained in sanitary condition but are presented for easy removal by a patron for his use.

This application is a division of copending application Serial No. 311,232, filed December 28, 1939, now Patent No. 2,326,604, August 3, 1943.

One of the objects of the invention is the provision of holders which may be readily and easily filled with tableware or the like with only the handles of such articles exposed in attractive arrangement for removal from the structures one at a time.

Another object is the provision of a dispenser which has a simple interlocking device which will prevent the replacing of a removed article of tableware into the holder while the holder is in its normal position for dispensing said ware.

Another object of the invention is the provision of a dispenser having a housing and removable units into which it is difficult or impossible to place articles of ware until certain locking mechanism have been manipulated to release the removable units from the housing.

These and other objects of the invention are accomplished by the provision of structures including a housing having associated removable holders which receive and hold spoons, forks and the like in such manner that the handles only thereof are exposed to be grasped by a user in removing the article, and in such manner that the ware may not be replaced in the dispenser without the operation of certain interlocking parts and the removal of the holder from the housing. A great advantage of the invention resides in the arrangement whereby it is not possible for a person to place his hands on that part of the tableware usually intended to come in contact with the food or the mouth without removing the ware from the dispenser after which removal it is impossible to replace the article in the dispenser. The advantages of such an arrangement in the interest of sanitation are self evident.

The invention will be better understood from the following detailed description thereof having reference to the accompanying drawings. Like reference numerals represent like parts throughout the several figures of the drawing herein—

Figure 1 is a perspective view of an assembled unit of one embodiment of the invention.

Fig. 2 is a perspective view in partial section of the housing adapted to hold the dispensing units in position for use.

Fig. 3 is a front view of a storage and dispensing unit separated from the housing.

Fig. 4 is a side sectional view of the unit shown in Fig. 3.

Fig. 5 is a top plan view of the dispensing unit of Fig. 3.

Fig. 6 is a detail view in partial section along the line 5—5 of Fig. 2 of the drawing looking in the direction of the arrows, of latching mechanism adapted to retain the dispensing units in the enclosing casing.

With reference to Figs. 1 and 2 of the drawing, designates a generally rectangular housing of attractive design having bottom, rear, top and end walls but having an open front to receive for retention in the housing removable storage and dispensing units 2 and 3, said units being adapted to be latched in position in the housing. Dispensing unit 2 for holding and dispensing knives is of the kind described and claimed in the above identified copending application and, except for its illustrated association in an entire assembly, does not form part of this invention. The entire assembly is adapted to be placed conveniently for dispensing tableware to the patrons of a restaurant or the like.

While various materials may be employed, it is preferable that the dispenser be made in all its parts of material, such as nickel-chromium bearing steel, which will resist corrosion and which will not stain silver or other tableware stored therein.

With reference to Figs. 3 to 5, there is shown a storage and dispensing unit for spoons and forks and the like comprising a cast metallic unit in the form of a double dispenser although single and other multiple dispensers are contemplated within the scope of the invention. The storage and dispensing unit comprises a generally rectangular casing having the vertically extending walls 4, which walls are formed with inwardly projecting lugs or barriers 5, as shown in Figs. 3 and 5. These lug portions are adapted to coact in pairs to define a passage area lesser in width than in that area between the main walls. The restricted passage forms a vertical slot of sufficient width and of such conformity to permit the handle portion of a spoon or fork to be retained between the lugs but narrow enough to prevent the passage of the bowl part of the spoon or the tine part of the fork therebetween in any position of the fork or spoon. The top of the dispenser is normally open except for a latching
device 6 which is pivotally mounted on the transverse rod 1 so that it may freely respond to the force of gravity. A recess 8 extending downwardly into the enlarged or lug portions of the side walls is provided to permit the entrance of the lower and downwardly depending end of the latch member 11, described above, and the slot 10 thereof is adapted to receive the helical spring, part 15. Said spring 15 is constrained between the upper wall of said retaining member 14 and the bottom of the well 15 of the lever 11 so as normally to retain the inner end of said latch member 11 in an upward position.

The spoon and fork dispenser of Fig. 3 is adapted to be retained within the casing 1, as shown in Fig. 1 so that the recess 8 of the lower wall thereof is adapted to coax with latching mechanism 11 described above, and the slot 10 thereof is adapted to coax with the plate member 12. Since spoons are often of a different length than are forks and since some spoons and some forks are of different length with respect to each other, we find it convenient to make the dispensers of Fig. 3 of different lengths, front to rear, to accommodate the length of the spoon or fork to be retained and dispensed therein. We, therefore, make the front edge of the retaining plate 12 to be of varying distances from the rear wall of the casing 1 and these varying distances are to be in conformity with the varying lengths front to rear of the spoon and fork dispensers so that, when in position, all of the dispensers for knives, spoons and forks shall be in alignment with the front of the retaining casing 1, as shown in Fig. 1.

The manner of using the dispensers of Fig. 3 is as follows:

Assuming that such a dispenser is mounted within the casing 1, as shown in Fig. 1, and that there is no ware within the dispenser, a person may, by lifting the outwardly extending end of the latching member 11 shown in Figs. 2 and 6, release the dispenser so that it may be drawn from the casing. This dispenser may be taken to a store of clean tableware, the latching mechanism 6 may be raised around the pivot 1 out of the way and spoons or forks, as the case may be, may be very conveniently dropped within the walls of the dispenser until it is filled, after which the latching member 6 is permitted to fall into the recess 8 and the dispenser is inserted into the casing 1 until it is latched in place, as described above. A patron wishing to remove spoon or fork from the dispenser will grasp the outwardly extending handle and raise the ware lifting the latching member 6, as shown in Fig. 4, until the spoon is above the restriction 7, after which it may be readily drawn outwardly from the front of the dispensing device. Should such a person attempt to replace the spoon into the dispenser, it will be discovered that the restricted passage between the lugs 8 will not permit of the passage of the bowl of the spoon or fork thereof in any position. Should the patron attempt to replace the ware through the top thereof, it will be discovered that the latching mechanism has fallen into place, thus preventing it. While the entire dispenser is retained within the casing 1 the latching mechanism 6 is not reached without difficulty or is completely unattainable.

From the foregoing description, it will be observed that there is provided a storage and dispensing structure which will maintain the silverware in sanitary condition in respect to their operative parts out of contact with the hands of patrons until the articles have been removed from the dispenser.

While the invention has been described in connection with a preferred embodiment thereof, it is to be understood that the words which have been used are words of description rather than of limitation, and that practice of the invention within the scope of the appended claims, may be resorted to without departing from the true scope and spirit of the invention in all its aspects.

We claim:

1. In an open front and top storage and dispensing device for table spoons, in combination, a bottom wall, a rear wall, a plurality of side walls, said side walls having along the forward inner portions thereof complementary extensions of substantial extent which, together, define generally the outline of part of the handle portion of said spoons, said extensions also being spaced but in such close relation, one with the other, that the space between them is too narrow to admit the operative part of the spoon to pass between them, a latch pivotally mounted on the device and overlying portions of said complementary extensions permitting the withdrawal of said spoon upwardly and outwardly away from said bottom wall and from said extensions on said side walls, and said latch being engaged normally with said extensions to prevent replacement of said spoon between said extensions.

2. In an open front and top storage and dispensing device for tableware, such as spoons and forks, in combination, a plurality of complementary parallel walls connected by rear and bottom walls and having juxtaposed inwardly extending surfaces shaped to conform generally to the outline of part of the tableware to be stored therein, and said juxtaposed surfaces being spaced but in such close relation, one with the other, that the space between them is too narrow to admit the operative part of the tableware to pass between them, and a latch pivoted on the device having a portion engaging said inwardly extending surfaces permitting the withdrawal of said tableware from between said juxtaposed complementary walls in a direction generally parallel to the surface of the walls and said latch serving normally to prevent replacement of said tableware between said surfaces.

3. An open front and top storage and dispensing device for tableware such as forks and spoons, a housing support having an open front, a plurality of containers for tableware detachably mounted in said support, each of said containers having an open top and front and consisting of a bottom wall, a rear wall and side walls, said walls having substantially forward laterally inward complementary extensions thereon defining with the other walls a compartment for receiving the operative
ends of tableware and a communicating slot between the wall extensions conforming generally to the outline of part of the handle portions of the ware, whereby handle ends of the ware may project through the front of the container in position to be manipulated by the hand of a user for removal of the ware from the container, and a gravity latch pivotally mounted at the top of each container having means thereon interlocking with the top edge portions of the side wall extensions, said latch being upwardly movable to permit withdrawal of ware from the container at the top thereof but serving normally to prevent replacement of the ware in the container.

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